

Let's Get Back to the Merits of SALT II

By EDWARD L. ROWNY

The first round of Senate committee hearings on SALT II added a new dimension to the debate—the need for increased defense spending in light of the unprecedented Soviet military buildup and the failure of the SALT process to arrest Soviet momentum. Resumption of the Senate debate was further slowed by the attempt by President Carter to resolve the issue of Soviet combat troops in Cuba. The interlude in the debate pending final resolution of these issues has afforded the Senate an excellent opportunity to examine the merits of the treaty.

Many Senators have quickly grasped the impending predicament facing the United States—Soviet strategic superiority and its inevitable boost to the Soviet drive for political dominance. It has become painfully obvious that if the Soviets did not consider themselves "more equal than others" in strategic power, they would not have been able to render the status quo apparently acceptable to the U.S. Soviet leaders have made good their characterization of the situation in Cuba as an "internal matter."

I was appointed a member of the U.S. SALT delegation because of my belief in arms control. I am still a believer in arms control—but only if the agreements reached don't undermine U.S. security. I am in favor of a SALT agreement, but not in favor of *this* SALT agreement. I believe that a fair and equitable agreement is in the best interests of both sides and is achievable.

Since the start of SALT, the U.S. has been cutting back its spending on strategic forces. Our hopes were that a treaty would make additional forces unnecessary and that restraint would be matched by the Soviet Union. Unfortunately the Soviet Union has neither arrested the momentum of its strategic buildup nor reciprocated our restraint. As a result the United States will, by the early 1980s, be strategically inferior to the Soviet Union.

No one seriously believes that future Soviet leaders, having added strategic superiority to their conventional and theater nuclear superiority, will fail to be more aggressive and less deterred from taking risks in crisis situations.

While increasing our defense spending and accelerating our strategic programs can help minimize the extent and duration of the strategic imbalance, this will not ensure increased spending in each of the next five years, the time needed to regain nuclear parity.

The Senate debate over defense spending and concern over the presence of Soviet combat troops in Cuba have caused issues posed by the agreement itself to be ignored. Is it an equal treaty or an unequal one? Will it contribute to enhancing deterrence and to restoring stability in crises? Will it contribute to or detract from U.S. security?

The SALT agreement before us is unequal in three major respects. First, it grants the U.S.S.R. a unilateral right to 308 heavy missile launchers. Soviet heavy missiles alone possess more destructive potential than all our ICBMs and SLBMs combined. Were it not for the massive "throw-weight" advantage of the Soviet ICBM force, half of which is attributable to their heavy missiles, the United States would not need to spend the full amount of some \$40 billion to make our ICBMs less vulnerable.

While proponents of the current treaty argue that it will limit the big Soviet SS-18s to 10 warheads each, they ignore the fact that we are faced with the almost certain prospect that the Soviets will utilize the existing potential of these heavy missiles and equip them with 20 to 30 warheads soon after the treaty expires. If there were limits on Soviet ICBM throw-weight now, we could more cheaply design a scheme based on the 3-to-1 Soviet advantage in ICBM warheads, instead of the even larger threat facing us after the treaty expires.

A second major inequality of the treaty allows the Soviets to have—but not count—some 375 intercontinental Backfire bombers. These Backfires can add an additional one-third to the currently overwhelming total strategic destructive potential of the U.S.S.R. Mr. Brezhnev promised only to limit Backfire's radius capability, that is, its ability to take off from the Soviet Union, strike U.S. targets and return to the Soviet Union. Our B-52 does not have the

capability of flying to the U.S.S.R. and returning to the U.S. unless refueled. Nor would the B-1. Using the Soviets' rationalization we should not count our own bombers in the force totals. Intercontinental bombers of both sides should be counted.

The third major inequality is that the treaty does not establish equal levels of forces. It is a serious fallacy to equate equal numbers to equal levels of forces. Public Law 92-448, the Jackson Amendment, called for equal levels of force capability, not equal numbers. The treaty lumps grossly disparate weapons of varying accuracies and destructive power as if they were identical. Equal numbers do not assure equal capabilities.

In our zeal to get an agreement on SALT we have made too many concessions, especially in the past two years. Therefore, the Senate should not ratify this seriously flawed agreement and thus legitimize inequality. To do so would seriously prejudice the prospect for an equitable treaty in the future. It would force the United States to spend unnecessarily large sums to regain strategic equality.

Now is the time for the Senate to return to an examination of the SALT II treaty on its own merits. I believe that a careful examination will lead them to amend it or recommit the treaty to further negotiations.

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